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OCI No. 0476/63

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Office of Current Intelligence
23 January 1963

CURRENT INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: The Security Situation in Venezuela

1. The Venezuelan Communist Party, with the support of the pro-Communist Movement of the Revolutionary Left, and extremist members of the Democratic Republic Union, is carrying out a deliberate campaign of violence and agitation aimed at the overthrow of President Betancourt's government. Terrorist activities of the Communists include the sabotage of US government and business installations, assassination of Venezuelan policemen and military personnel, robberies, and other violence.

2. It is possible that the Communists may also attempt to assassinate President Betancourt, either in Venezuela or during his forthcoming visit to the Dominican Republic.

3. During the electoral period preceding the presidential and congressional elections, scheduled for late 1963, conditions throughout Venezuela are likely to become increasingly unstable. Although the Communists and their supporters probably do not command sufficient resources to unseat the government by themselves, the leftists hope to create chaos and eventually provoke a military coup. The Communists apparently believe that they would then be in a favorable position to draw upon mass support and be able to overthrow a subsequent military regime.

4. President Betancourt also faces continued plotting by rightists within the armed forces and conservative civilian groups. Many military leaders have been disturbed by the government's inability to maintain public order. There is a danger that rightist officers may exploit the unsettled situation and attempt to seize power.

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5. After a temporary lull in activities, some Communist guerrilla forces have regrouped and are operating in several western states. There are an estimated four to six active bands with a strength of approximately 40-60 men each. Despite the numerous reports that Cuba has been supplying arms, money, and guerrilla warfare training, the evidence is largely circumstantial. Communist and other leftist leaders have frequently traveled to Cuba [REDACTED]

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